

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Claims 1-14 were pending in the application. Applicant hereby affirms the provisional election to prosecute the invention of claims 1-12 and 14 and to withdraw claim 13 from further consideration. By the above amendments to the claims, claims 1, 5, and 12 are amended, claims 13 and 14 are canceled, and new claims 15-22 are added. The new claims are fully supported in the specification. Therefore, claims 1-12 and 15-22 are now pending.

Claims 1-12 and 15-22 are directed to a collaborative information system in which metadata is used to provide a feedback mechanism for assessing the reliability of the data and of the contributors of the data. Users can contribute data and metadata, can modify data provided by other users, and can assess the reliability of the data provided by other users. The users control the structures (e.g., tables and fields) in the database and the contents thereof. In essence, then, claims 1-12 and 15-22 relate to the collection and use of metadata for data integrity in a user-managed (i.e., decentralized) database environment.

In Gross and Aycock, information provided by users (including so-called "metadata") is used to assess the reliability of entities that are external to the database, such as items offered by on-line vendors (Gross) and potential vendors (Aycock), as opposed to the reliability of the data itself. There is no metadata stored in the databases of Gross and Aycock for assessing the reliability of the information itself or of the contributors of the information. For example, in Gross, the database stores attributes of products that can be used to assess the products, but there is no way to assess whether the attributes stored in the database are correct, so incorrect attributes may lead to an incorrect assessment of the products. The Examiner points to information, such as a user name and password, that might be requested in Gross, but that information merely identifies the user and does not evaluate the reliability of the user or the user's contributions. Similarly, in Aycock, suppliers provide self-evaluations that are

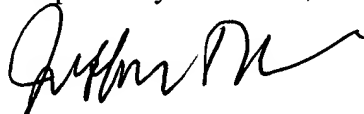
then audited to confirm the information provided by the suppliers and to obtain additional information, but there is no implicit or explicit information that would help a purchasing agent (or anyone else, for that matter) to assess the reliability of information provided by a given supplier. Furthermore, in neither Gross nor Aycock can one contributor modify or assess data provided by another contributor (e.g., in Aycock, one supplier cannot correct mistakes in another supplier's self-evaluation, nor can one supplier assess the reliability of another supplier's self-evaluation). In these respects, then, neither Gross nor Aycock describe or otherwise suggest a "collaborative" information system in which metadata is used to assess the reliability of the data itself.

Thus, neither Gross nor Aycock, alone or in combination, teach or otherwise suggest a collaborative information system comprising a metadata-enhanced database (metabase) for recording data and related metadata providing details about the data and contributors of the data, the metadata enabling a metabase user to assess the reliability of the data and the contributors of the data, as claimed in claim 1. Claim 1 is therefore believed to be in a form suitable for allowance. Claim 1 was amended to clarify the role of metadata. The amendment of claim 1 was not made to avoid the prior art of record or for any other reason of patentability.

Because a dependent claim is deemed to include all limitations of its base claim and any intervening claims, dependent claims 2-12 and 15-22 are also believed to be in a form suitable for allowance. Claim 5 was amended to clarify that notification regards changes to the metabase contents rather than to the metabase itself. Claim 12 was amended to clarify that it is not "a metabase structure" per se, but rather "metabase structures" (e.g., tables and fields), that can be defined, edited, etc. The amendments of claims 5 and 12 were not made to avoid the prior art of record or for any other reason of patentability.

All pending claims are believed to be in a form suitable for allowance. Therefore, the application is believed to be in a condition for allowance. The Applicant respectfully requests early allowance of the application. The Applicant requests that the Examiner contact the undersigned, Jeffrey T. Klayman, if it will assist further examination of this application.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jeffrey T. Klayman', written in a cursive style.

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